

## Academic Development Centre Peer Dialogue on Teaching (PDoT) Scheme

**Our scheme is aligned to and fulfils the requirements of the University of Warwick's policy on Peer Dialogue on Teaching approved by Senate in June 2019.**

The scheme is based on the understanding that everyone in ADC who teaches and supports learning has knowledge and expertise to share. Whilst we do this on a regular basis through ongoing peer work and discussions, observing each other will offer an additional opportunity to evaluate our own teaching and focus the dialogue on specific aspects of practice.

### How does the scheme operate?

Our peer observations are formative and collaborative. There is therefore a presumption of confidentiality; only participation in the scheme will be monitored. All staff members who teach should participate annually in the scheme once as an observer *and* once as an observee and should record this on the relevant PDoT scheme document on our shared drive. Suggestions for staff development and examples of good practice observed can be shared as appropriate by the observee and/or included in PDRs.

### Before scheduling your observation

Much of the 'work' of a teaching observation is done before the session through the reflective thinking which will enable you to identify areas of your practice to enquire into and how dialogue with your observers can feed into your enquiry. This will enable you to identify clearly to your observer what your focus is, and enable them to support your development.

### It is important to prepare for the observation process well.

- **Consider what you would like to work on through the process of the teaching observations.** To get the most out of your observations you should identify some aspects of your practice that you would like to focus on. This will enable your observer to work with you, and to offer more precise and useful perspectives on your practice, rather than make broad impressionistic observations. This is the most important element of the observation preparation. Everything mentioned below will flow from these decisions.
- **Think carefully about which sessions you would like to be observed.** Think about what you wish to focus on, and which sort of teaching context will be the most beneficial for your development. You should view the observation (and also perhaps your work as an observer), the work you will do in preparation, and the resulting reflection and development work that you will do as a process.
- **Consider who to observe you for which session.** Different observers will bring different perspectives and expertise. Seeing your practice from the perspective of a colleague with a different disciplinary background may also help you to challenge your taken-for-granted assumptions about what good teaching looks like.
- **Think about learners/participants and the type of learning taking place.** It is important to consider who your learners are and whether they might be affected by the presence of an observer. This may be particularly relevant in very small group or one-to-one mentoring/coaching situations – you might therefore consider whether these sessions could be recorded for 'observation'. If you are teaching online you may need to arrange permissions for your observer.

### Pre-observation

When setting up the observation you should also schedule your pre-observation meeting, which ideally will take place 3-5 days before the session. Before you meet you should send your observer the observation form with Part 1 completed. This will inform the conversation you will have at the pre-observation meeting. Observers should have a broad idea about the session they are visiting, the location, the participants, the topic and where this teaching 'fits' within a programme. They should also be clear on your developmental goals, and what you hope to achieve from the observation process.

### *During the observation*

The presence of an observer can change the dynamics in a teaching scenario. You should think about:

- **Letting the students know about the observation.** In larger groups an observer may go unnoticed but sometimes students may think that *they* are the ones being judged in some way. It can be helpful to explain, at the start of the session, why the observer is here (for your development, not theirs') and for how long, and to introduce them to students.
- **Your relationship to the observer in the session.** It would not be usual to 'involve' an observer directly in the activities of the session; after all, they are there to provide an impartial view as a non-participant. There may be circumstances where this could be appropriate though.
- **The observer's position in the session.** You should tell the observer where you would like them to sit, as appropriate to the delivery in the session. Ensure they can see your delivery and resources as well as the students can, whilst remaining relatively inconspicuous. It would be appropriate to provide them with the same handouts as the students. In addition, if your session is more than one hour in length, you should consider how they are going to be able to leave (for example, if you call a break).
- **What to do if the plans change.** Sometimes a session plan may need to change or circumstances mean that you move away from what was planned. You might need to articulate this not just to students, but to the observer too.

### *After the observation*

Perhaps the most important time in the observation process is after the session, when you have the opportunity to reflect and learn from your experiences and the feedback you receive. You should:

- **Spend time reflecting on the session.** How did the session go? What worked well? What worked less well? You will be focused upon the areas you identified as developmental priorities. However, there may also be new, perhaps surprising areas to focus on, things you may not have planned for and they too are rich sources of reflection on practice.
- **Complete Part 3 of the observation form and send it to your observer.** Capture your thoughts in Part 3 of the observation form. Try to be as specific as you can, you are capturing the 'What?' so thinking clearly and deeply about the detail will help you going forward to identify the significances and possible actions (So what? What next?).
- **Meet with your observer.** The post-observation meeting will give you an opportunity to discuss the session, starting with your reflections and observations. This meeting should be conceived as a conversation about your teaching practice rather than just receiving 'feedback'. Together you will share your experiences of the session, discuss the implications for practice going forward. This meeting isn't for your observer to identify things that you got wrong, or that you need to improve upon, rather an exploration of how you are going, and what you might do to consolidate, strengthen and enhance your practice in future. You will also therefore discuss possible 'next steps'.
- **Your observer will send you their written notes for Parts 2 and 4.**

- **Complete the ‘next steps’ section of the observation form.** It is important not to see teaching observations as ‘one off events’ but part of a development process. Take identified areas for development and prioritise them at your next observation. If you feel you have met certain targets around an area of your practice (for example planning) you might like to shift the focus for subsequent observations (for example, to student engagement).
- **Use the knowledge gained from the observation process as part of your evidence-base to develop future teaching.** The teaching observation will offer you a different perspective on your practice which you can draw upon when developing your practice.
- **Expand the knowledge by broadening your evidence-base.** Thinking about Brookfield’s four lenses you will have undertaken autobiographical consideration through your reflections and have the perspective of a colleague, you might therefore consider how you might see the same issues through the participants’ eyes and through the lens of pedagogic literature. You should also ensure that any action you plan as a result of the observation process is informed by the broader evidence-base offered by educational research.

### *Observing others*

If you are the observer, you will engage in the observation process above. You should prioritise the areas where the observee has specified a need for feedback, but not limit yourself to these. You may like to consider some of the critical questions listed in the table below.

Remember that this is a developmental process and overly negative or unconstructive comments are less helpful – always substantiate your remarks with an example from what you have observed.

Offer the observee the opportunity to reflect on elements you have observed and build on their reflections to develop the dialogue.

For example, ‘I noticed that students were not answering your questions to them during the lecture, why do you think this might be?’ ‘What approach do you think might be useful to address this?’ ‘What do you think would happen if...’

If the observee is stuck in their process of reflection it might be useful for you to take a more directive approach and share your interpretation of the situation: ‘I think that this is because you did not leave very much time between asking the question and answering the question yourselves, and that at other points in the lecture you used rhetorical questions to emphasise your point. I interpret this to mean that either students are not sure whether you want them to answer or not, and/or that they are accustomed to you filling the silence so they don’t need to worry about responding’.

You should return feedback in a timely manner, and agree a mechanism for feedback with the individual concerned (for example, a short meeting, telephone call etc).

### *Maintaining your observation record*

You will need to record Name of the observer/Name of the observee/Title and date of the session on the relevant PDoT scheme document on our shared drive. The dialogue and reflections will remain confidential between the observer and the observee unless the observee decides to share them. However, you might wish to save a copy of the observation form and any related notes in your personal files for future reference.

Aspects you might consider as part of the observation process.

<b>Planning, organisation and structure</b>	<b>A1, A4, K1, K3, V2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is the relationship between this session and the wider curriculum/module/lecture series? Is this made clear to students?</li><li>• Are the intended learning outcomes well-constructed and appropriate to the session? Are they measurable?</li><li>• Are students clear what they should know and be able to do by the end of the session?</li><li>• Does the session include opportunities for students/lecturer to assess how well they have been achieved?</li><li>• Is the session well-structured? Are students given an overview of the session, and signposts within it?</li><li>• How prepared are students? What, if anything, have they been asked to do before the session?</li><li>• How will the session be evaluated? Is this part of its design?</li><li>• Is there space for emergent outcomes?</li></ul>	
<b>Teaching methods and learning activities</b>	<b>A2, A3, K1, K2, K3, K4, K5, V1, V2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What teaching methods are used?</li><li>• What learning activities are used?</li><li>• Are methods and learning activities appropriate to the content?</li><li>• Are methods and learning activities aligned with the intended learning outcomes?</li><li>• Are methods and learning activities well-executed?</li><li>• What kinds of learning resources are used? Are they available to students before or after the session? Does the session use learning technologies?</li></ul>	
<b>Content</b>	<b>A2, A3, K1, K3, K4, V3, V4</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is there enough content, too much content or is it just right?</li><li>• Is the session content pitched at the right level?</li><li>• Does it offer appropriate challenge for students?</li><li>• Is the content up to date?</li><li>• Is the content accurate?</li><li>• Are examples used to illustrate theory and ideas, and to support students' understanding?</li><li>• Who is creating the content of the session? Is it teacher-led or student-led?</li><li>• How is the content of the session related to any assessment (formative or summative)?</li></ul>	
<b>Student engagement and interaction</b>	<b>A2, A3, A4, K1, K2, K3, K4, K5, V1, V2</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are students doing? What is the lecturer doing?</li><li>• Who is talking? And who are they talking to? Who is not talking?</li><li>• Are students co-constructing the session or following a pre-determined plan?</li><li>• If students have been required to prepare for class, how is this preparation utilised in the session?</li><li>• Are students on task?</li><li>• Are there equal opportunities for all students to engage?</li><li>• How diverse is the student cohort and how is diversity accommodated?</li><li>• Are students actively participating in class? How are interactions managed?</li><li>• How do you know that students have met the intended learning outcomes by the end of the session?</li><li>• Are students able to offer feedback or evaluation of the session?</li><li>• Are there any barriers to engaged student learning?</li></ul>	

## Learning environment

A4, K2, K3, V1, V2

- How does the teaching space impact upon the planned learning and activities?
- Is the learning space accessible? Are online environments accessible?
- Are online spaces used within the session? How are these introduced/managed?
- Is there a productive learning environment?
- Is the classroom a safe space?
- Are students encouraged to contribute? To take risks? To challenge themselves?

Appendix B: Teaching observation form

Part 1 (to be completed by the observee)	
Name:	Department:
Observer's name:	Observer's department:
Date of session:	
Time:	
Venue:	
Please briefly outline the context of the session: (You should include: level of study, size of group, where in the module this session sits, the nature of the student cohort, any particular challenges, and anything else that you think is relevant.)	
Session intended learning outcomes:	

What aspect of your teaching practice, relevant to this session, are you currently trying to develop?

Where are you at with this now? This might include progress through actioning 'next steps' from previous teaching observations. Please offer some brief reflection on your development in this area.

Part 2 Post observation (to be completed by the observer)

Comments relating to issue under exploration.

Part 3 Post-observation  
(to be completed by the observee)

Before the session you were going to work on the aspects detailed in part 2. How did this go?



What went well during the session?

Were there any challenges?

Is there anything else that you would like to note?

Part 4: Summary comments by observer

### Planning, organisation and structure

Consider aspects such as: intended learning outcomes, clarity of structure, context, links with previous sessions etc.

### Teaching methods and learning activities

Consider aspects such as: teaching approaches, methods, and resources, learning activities, communication.

### Content

Consider aspects such as: quantity, level, currency, accuracy, challenge, use of examples.

### Student engagement and interaction

Consider aspects such as: student-centredness, student participation and equality of opportunity to engage, respect for individual learners and diverse learning communities, are students on task.

Learning environment

Consider aspects such as: space (physical and virtual), atmosphere, accessibility.

Part 5: Next steps (to be completed by observee)

Observee

Observer

Name:

Name:

Date:

Date: